

have on hand. The industry should be encouraged and in some cases required to store and transport dangerous chemicals in smaller quantities.

"Fourth, limiting chemical facilities in highly populated areas. Many chemical facilities were built long before terrorism was a concern and when fewer people lived in their surrounding areas. There should be a national initiative to move dangerous chemical facilities, where practical, to lower population areas.

"Fifth, government oversight of chemical safety. The chemical industry wants to police itself through voluntary programs, but the risks are too great to leave chemical security in private hands. Facilities that use dangerous chemicals should be required to identify their vulnerabilities to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Homeland Security and to meet Federal safety standards."

Now, those are the five points that were mentioned by the New York Times yesterday in their editorial, and also by Greenpeace. But I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that more than 3 years have passed since 9/11 and Congress has yet to seriously address the need to secure our Nation's chemical plants. We are finally seeing some movement in the Senate, but not yet in the House. And it is time to take serious action to reduce the threat of an attack on a chemical facility which would endanger millions of lives.

Last month I reintroduced the Chemical Security Act, H.R. 2237, which requires the EPA and the Department of Homeland Security to work together to identify high-priority chemical facilities. Once identified, these facilities would be required to assess vulnerabilities and hazards and then development and implement a plan to improve security and use safer technologies within 18 months. Senator CORZINE has introduced this bill in the Senate.

Now, since the legislation was first introduced in the House in 2002, I have tried to get the Republican leadership to conduct a congressional hearing on chemical security. And I welcomed the announcement last week on the House floor during the discussion or debate on the Homeland Security bill, there was an announcement that the House Select Committee on Homeland Security chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. Cox) said his committee would hold a hearing or start a series of hearings on chemical security beginning June 14.

I would also like to see my own committee, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, which has jurisdiction over chemical facilities, to follow the gentleman from California's (Mr. Cox) lead and schedule hearings or begin to have hearings this summer.

Hopefully, we will see some positive signs, some movement in the House, at least to have hearings on the issue, but it really is a very important issue, not only for New Jersey, my home State,

but throughout the country. I am also pleased that the New York Times has pointed this out.

Greenpeace, of course, has talked about a number of initiatives even beyond the ones that were mentioned in the New York Times, and I plan to spend some time over the next few weeks talking to Greenpeace about whether additional legislation is necessary to address some of their concerns.

HOLES IN NATIONAL GUARD BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, last weekend I traveled back to Oregon, as I frequently do, and participated in an Armed Forces Day parade in Cottage Grove, Oregon. The particular focus this year was the return from Iraq of the 2162nd, a National Guard unit which is based in Cottage Grove, in the last 60 days. There was a good turnout among members of the community.

Of course, we are looking forward next week to Memorial Day, which will be a sober event, as we will honor some of those who have recently lost their lives in service to our Nation.

But one thing stands out in both of these celebrations and that is that there is tremendous support for our troops in uniform, but that support somehow is not getting translated in many ways into policy here in Washington, D.C., in the budgets proposed by the President that relate to offset of benefits for disabled veterans, a disabled veterans tax, that relate to other services for veterans or equity in benefits for the National Guard.

Today, as I got to the plane, I saw an article "Dental Problems Stymie Guard Call-ups." This particular article was about the National Guard in Washington State where 30 percent of the 4,500 called up were ineligible for active duty because of dental problems, 20 percent nationally. I do not know the percentage for Oregon; I have not seen it. But when I was meeting with members of the 2162nd, when they were down in Fort Hood prior to their deployment to Iraq, and the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) and I were meeting with them, this one fellow in the front says, I have a problem, Congressman; I would like you to try and help me out here.

He opens up his mouth really wide and he is missing a couple of front teeth. I said, What is going on there? He said, I had two bad teeth. I went to my predeployment physical. They said, You have those bad teeth; we have to take care of them. So they yanked his teeth out and sent him to Fort Hood. But at Fort Hood they said, You are not active duty military. We are not going to take care of your problem. You go to the end of the line and you will be in Iraq before we get around to it.

So he was going to go home to Oregon on his leave before he left to try to get false teeth inserted so he would not spend a year in Iraq with a big gap in his front teeth.

We need equity in benefits and better benefits for our Guard members. We are treating the National Guard indistinguishable from active duty forces, yet they still often suffer in terms of equipment and they definitely suffer in terms of equity of benefits, health coverage for our Guard members before they are activated. All Guard members should receive health benefits during their service in the Guard. That means they will be ready to defend the country at the drop of a hat. They are ready to deploy. But it also is a good way to induce and recognize the service of these people in our National Guard.

This morning when I got to the plane there was another Guard member there from Kingsley Air Force Base who does military police work, on his way to a conference. And he and I got in a little chat and we were talking about the proposed base closure in Portland. Then he said, When are we going to get recognition on our retirement benefits. The fact that Guard members have a set age instead of a set number of years of service, they are discriminated against.

Education benefits, they are discriminated against. Active duty military soldiers serve in Iraq, come back, leave the military, can get education benefits. National Guard soldiers serve in Iraq, come back having finished their contract in their term, want to get education benefits. No. They have to sign up for another term in the Guard.

But the active duty soldier did nothing to earn those benefits.

We need equity in education benefits. We need better health care benefits. We need better pension benefits. We have to begin treating our National Guard members like the essential component they are of the Nation's national defense today.

They are not an afterthought. They are the front line as much as the active duty military. And there can be no more fitting recognition by this House of Representatives coming up to Memorial Day, in the wake of Armed Forces Day, than to deliver on those changes in benefits and those improvements for our Guard soldiers and to better deliver veterans benefits for all of our Nation's veterans so that Lincoln's words do not become a hollow promise.

□ 1945

We will take care of our veterans. We can afford it in the greatest Nation on earth, and we should make good those promises before Memorial Day.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.